

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20510**

June 17, 2021

The Honorable Xavier Becerra  
Secretary  
Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Becerra:

We write to encourage efforts to ensure that Minnesotans can continue to access telehealth services after the coronavirus pandemic ends.

As you know, the federal government has taken steps to make providing and receiving care through telehealth easier during the coronavirus pandemic. As more patients and providers see the benefits of telehealth due to the increased utilization over the past year, it is important to consider how the delivery of health care can be improved through telehealth and telemedicine, and how these services can remain accessible beyond the coronavirus pandemic.

Telehealth continues to be a critical service in Minnesota for many patients and doctors during this pandemic, and telehealth flexibilities offered by the federal government have improved the care provided to both rural and urban communities that have long faced barriers in accessing high-quality health care. Prior to the pandemic, just 3 percent of patient visits used telehealth in Minnesota. In 2020, that number rose to 28 percent.<sup>1</sup> Our nation continues to face challenges in responding to the increased need for mental health services, and in Minnesota, mental health providers were found to be providing care via telemedicine or telephone at higher rates than other provider types.<sup>2</sup> And to measure the effectiveness of such care, nearly 83 percent of providers surveyed by the Minnesota Department of Health during this pandemic also reported that telehealth was meeting their patients' needs.<sup>3</sup>

With the increased utilization, telehealth has been shown to increase access to health care for patients, communities, and vulnerable populations, especially people living in rural areas and people with transportation barriers. Telehealth is also associated with decreased wait times for appointments, as well as improvements in patient attendance through declines in "no-show" rates and late arrivals.<sup>4</sup> With these benefits in mind, more than 85 percent of providers surveyed by the

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<sup>1</sup> Star Tribune Editorial Board (April 11, 2021). Keep moving forward on expanded telehealth in Minnesota. *Star Tribune*. <https://www.startribune.com/keep-moving-forward-on-expanded-telehealth-in-minnesota/600044837/>.

<sup>2</sup> Office of Rural Health and Primary Care, Minnesota Department of Health (September 20, 2020). Health Care Provider COVID Survey Results May 4 through September 2, 2020. *Minnesota Department of Health*. <https://www.health.state.mn.us/data/workforce/covidsurvey/docs/surveyresults.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Star Tribune Editorial Board (April 11, 2021). Keep moving forward on expanded telehealth in Minnesota. *Star Tribune*. <https://www.startribune.com/keep-moving-forward-on-expanded-telehealth-in-minnesota/600044837/>.

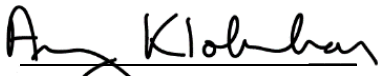
<sup>4</sup> Minnesota Department of Human Services (December 16, 2020). Telehealth Utilization Report. *Minnesota Department of Human Services*. [https://mn.gov/dhs/assets/telemedicine-utilization-report-2020\\_tcm1053-458660.pdf](https://mn.gov/dhs/assets/telemedicine-utilization-report-2020_tcm1053-458660.pdf).

Minnesota Department of Health who have used telehealth said they planned to continue providing at least some care through telehealth after the pandemic ended.<sup>5</sup>

For these reasons, we encourage your continued efforts in working with Congress and stakeholders to ensure patients can maintain critical access to health care through telehealth, and that providers have the certainty needed to provide continuity of care for patients and are adequately reimbursed for telehealth services.

As your partners in Congress, we look forward to working with you to ensure that Minnesotans can continue to access telehealth services after the pandemic ends. Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

  
Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator

  
Angie Craig  
United States Senator

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<sup>5</sup> Office of Rural Health and Primary Care, Minnesota Department of Health (September 20, 2020). Health Care Provider COVID Survey Results May 4 through September 2, 2020. *Minnesota Department of Health*. <https://www.health.state.mn.us/data/workforce/covidsurvey/docs/surveyresults.pdf>.